

FROM BARTH'S TRINITARIAN CHRISTOLOGY TO MOLTMANN'S TRINITARIAN PNEUMATOLOGY

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Karl Barth called for a new paradigm of the Holy Spirit shortly before his death in 1968. He suggested that this task might be done by one of his own students. He confessed that his Trinitarian Christology had neglected the Holy Spirit because he had wanted to avoid falling into the subjectivism of pietism and liberalism. More specifically, modernism (as Barth called it) threatened the church's self understanding of God as Triune.¹ Hence Barth's theology was constructed largely as an antidote to Schleiermacher's liberalism.

It is well known that Barth introduced into contemporary theology the significance of the Trinity as the key to a Christian understanding of God. Barth was aware that the prominence he was giving to the doctrine of the Trinity was "very isolated" in the history of doctrine, but he insisted that it must be the starting point of Christian doctrine because God reveals Godself as Triune in the history of salvation.²

In his *Church Dogmatics*, Barth rejected his earlier espousal of liberal Protestantism. He protested vigorously against its compromise with secular thinking and its watered-down version of biblical faith, especially its negative attitude about the Trinity as if it were an unnecessary appendage to Christian belief. Barth reinstated in a radical way the priority of a supernaturalistic concept of the Triune God who has spoken God's Word "from above." All human efforts to prove or disprove God's reality are ineffective. God alone is the absolute Subject of God's own revelation to humanity. Jesus Christ is the absolute focal point of the self-revealing God, and everything in Scripture is a witness either by anticipation in the Old Testament or by recollection in the New Testament to Jesus Christ. God as Father and God as Holy Spirit are interpreted in the light of this Christomonism.

One of Barth's last words before his death was to criticize this Trinitarian Christology of his *Church Dogmatics* because he had not adequately integrated the

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doctrine of the Holy Spirit into theology.³ Barth admitted his own "perplexity" on how this task might be done. He recognized that the subjectivistic concept of experience in Enlightenment rationalism and in Schleiermacher's liberalism was really concerned implicitly with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but Barth recognized that a fear of subjectivism could not serve as an excuse for his failure to develop a theology of the Spirit.⁴ The one student of Barth who has responded to his call for a new paradigm is Jürgen Moltmann, whose doctrine of the Holy Spirit is largely free of the subjectivism which plagued Barth.

MOLTMANN'S MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODEL OF EXPERIENCE

Moltmann's pneumatology is centered in an historical understanding of theology unlike Barth's Trinitarian Christology which was authoritarian-based in a concept of revelation "from above" without any rational or affective basis other than mere faith in God's self-disclosure. Barth's autocratic concept of revelation created the sense that theology after all was an irrational affair and that God was nothing more than a projection of our human ego as Feuerbach had so persuasively charged. But with Moltmann, the revelation of God is not a private affair, subjectively imagined to happen in a non-historical moment of self-disclosure. Rather, the revelation of God is a real historical happening in the concrete world and can be affirmed with rational integrity.

Barth had suggested that Moltmann might be the specific person who would promote and even independently "revise" *Church Dogmatics*. Barth's reading of *Theology of Hope* is what encouraged Barth to think Moltmann could possibly be his intellectual and theological heir. Barth had one major problem with this expectation regarding Moltmann. Moltmann had made eschatology the dominating principle of his theology. Barth rightly perceived this new orientation to be a radical departure from his *Church Dogmatics*. Barth hoped that Moltmann's subsequent writings would bring about a realignment with Barth's supernaturalistic model which sharply distinguished between the immanent and economic trinity.⁵ This would not be forthcoming because Moltmann developed an eschatological model of reality which disallowed the kind of dualism which Barth's supranaturalistic model entailed. Moltmann replied in a letter to Barth that his doctrine of the immanent trinity set over against the economic trinity was a point in *Church Dogmatics* where "I always lost my breath."⁶ As we shall point out below, Moltmann was not denying the self-existence of God, but he was rejecting the idea of an artificial distinction between God and the world. Eschatology emphasizes the actual presence of God in the world, and Moltmann believes this divine presence is not merely a chronologically future event. Rather, this real future event is happening now. Eschatology is real history.

The title of one of his recent books, *History and the Triune God*, says it well. Moltmann shows throughout his writings that he believes the history of salvation is rationally and existentially defensible, personally transforming, and socially revolutionary. Without this historical/objective perspective, any doctrine of the Holy Spirit would easily bog down in the quagmire of subjectivism. Hence it would have been difficult for Barth to have developed a new paradigm of the Holy Spirit since his Trinitarian Christology was already heavily enmeshed within a subjectivism which he had ironically fought so hard and so long against. Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* (1964) pointed the way out of the entanglements of subjectivism by critiquing positivism which had become the working assumptions of modern his-

tonical criticism. He also exposed existentialism and neo-orthodoxy as inadequate solutions.

Moltmann has sought to reinstate the role of personal experience as a basis for doing theology without succumbing to the liberalism of Schleiermacher and the subjectivistic tendencies of Pietism.⁷ Moltmann's focus is that through the Third Person of the Trinity believers enjoy a shared and personal experience with God. Moltmann writes: "By experience of the Spirit I mean an awareness of God in, with, and beneath the experience of life, which gives us assurance of God's fellowship, friendship, and love."⁸ This experience of the Spirit includes the remembrance of Christ and the expectation of God's future. Hence pneumatology presupposes christology and prepares the way for eschatology.⁹

Ever since the rise of modern philosophy and the development of modern science, the concept of experience has been restricted to denote the way facts can be controlled and interpreted clearly and distinctly through rational reflection. Truth claims are always the result of one's own empirical experience. To paraphrase Kant, we create reality by our own active thinking because there is nothing we know through experience which is not first put there by our creative minds.¹⁰ This reduction of all truth and reality to the active determinations of the human mind is the hallmark of modern scientific methodology. With the elimination of any passive elements entering into our consideration of what is real, the experimental method elevates the concepts of domination, self-consciousness, and rational demonstrability. This modern rationalistic concept of experience means the rejection of the primal dimensions of experience and the consequent "desolate erosion of life."¹¹ And quite obviously a personal experience of God is impossible, as Kant maintained.

Moltmann attacks this one-sided modern definition of experience as inadequate on the grounds that self-experience is not nearly so absolute as modern thought would have us believe. An analysis of the social pattern of inter-subjectivity demonstrates that the consciousness of the self is mediated to us through other selves as well. It is not entirely self-constituted. Likewise, Moltmann points out that social experience is not in itself totally self-constituted; rather, there is a relationship which exists between human beings and their world. More specifically, we as human beings have a body within the larger framework of nature which provide the basis for our primal and tacit experiences of ourselves and our understanding of our world which the modern concept of experience ignores.¹²

Moltmann proposes a multidimensional concept of experience. He of course does not reject modern scientific methodology, but he rather calls for broadening this base to allow for potential experiences beyond consciousness and the self-determination of things. This larger meaning of experience, while incorporating the element of critical analysis, assumes a fundamental attitude of trust about our capacity to experience reality. The one-sided hermeneutic of doubt and skepticism assumed in the modern concept of experience is destructive of human community as well as diminishes the personal meaning of human life. The knowledge of God is a meaningful concept only if human experience is truly open to a dimension of reality beyond its own self-determination.

This is not to suggest that human experience has a natural capacity for grasping the reality of God, but rather to point out the *passive* capacity of human experience to receive what lies beyond itself. This means that transcendence is not to be limited to *self-transcendence* as modern thought assumes. Rather, we experience God as transcendent in, with, and beneath each experience of the larger world. But even so, we not only experience God, but God

experiences us. The point here is that unless we can talk about God objectively in terms of his own experience, then any talk about our experience of God evaporates into sheer subjectivism. Moltmann makes the further point that only if we understand the world as existing within the life of God can we once again talk about those special experiences of God in the history of salvation which form the basis of the Christian narrative.¹³

Moltmann is a true student of Barth because he took seriously Barth's warning not to turn pneumatology into anthropology. This can be seen in the way that Moltmann has emphasized the distinctive personhood of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not an extension of the human spirit. The Holy Spirit is not just a point of union between God the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not just the Father and Son working together and relating together as a "we." Rather, the Holy Spirit is also just as distinctive in possessing personal specificity as the Father and Son.¹⁴ This personal specificity of the Holy Spirit has not received adequate theological recognition in modern and contemporary theology—until Moltmann brought it into center stage.

THE PERICHORETIC UNITY OF THE TRINITY

Moltmann asserts that Western Christianity has developed largely a defective soteriology because it has a defective pneumatology. The root cause of this problem is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of God. Ever since the development of the concept of the Trinity in the Western tradition, beginning with Tertullian coining of the word *trinitas* and Augustine's more systematic development of *una substantia, tres personae*, the unity of God has usurped the role which rightly belongs to the three Persons of the Godhead. Consequently, Western Christianity has implicitly been monarchical in its view of God; it has focused more on the Father of the Son, giving rise more to a duality rather than a Trinity. And the Holy Spirit has for all practical purposes taken on the role of a force or power than a distinct person of his own.¹⁵

Moltmann believes that this monarchical tendency was exacerbated further by the "unofficial" introduction of the so-called *filioque* clause into the Nicene Creed in the West which finally led to the schism between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in 1054. The Nicene Creed affirmed that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father, but the Western church added that the Holy Spirit proceeded from Father *and* Son. The Eastern theologians argued that this downgraded the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit by subordinating the Holy Spirit to the Son, as if the Spirit is a mere power or effect of Christ. To say that the Son is the origin of the Spirit thus confuses the Trinitarian relationships and makes the Holy Spirit less than divine in comparison with the Son. To say that the Son is also the origin of the Spirit is unintentionally turning the Son into a second Father.¹⁶ The Father alone is the source of all reality; the Son is the mediator of reality; and the Holy Spirit is the agent of God in reality. So the Father creates through his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. In terms of *constitution*, Moltmann insists of course the Father is the eternal origin of the Son and the Spirit. So Moltmann acknowledges the "monarchy" of the Father in the eternal sense of the *constitution* of the Trinitarian persons, but in terms of the actual movement of the divine persons they are totally equal without any degree of subordination. Moltmann calls this movement "the circulation of the divine life."¹⁷

Beginning with the Cappadocian Fathers, the Trinitarian relationships were defined in terms of reciprocity and mutual interpenetration. John of Damascus in the eighth century particularly gave a summary of the Eastern church's position on the Trinity in terms of *perichoresis*.¹⁸ The Father exists in the Son, the Son in the Father, and both of them in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and the Son. The Trinitarian persons possess their own unique characteristics which distinguish them from each other and in the same way it is their personal differences which bind them together in love and mutual reciprocity. Intimacy, friendship is the defining quality of their oneness and unity. The threeness of God is what determines the oneness of God, and the oneness of God is defined in terms of God's threeness.

This "circulation" of the divine Persons is not a tritheism. For God is not composed of three separate, independent beings who come together at some time later in order to form a fellowship. Nor is this a modalism. For the three persons are not three modes of being without eternal personal differentiations. Rather, it is the eternal "circulation" of the divine persons in perfect love for each other and in fellowship with each other which constitutes their experience of eternal life. This inner-Trinitarian relationship is what constitutes their oneness. This stands over against Augustine's model of God as one substance, three persons.

Moltmann argues in favor of the Eastern church's understanding because the Western idea of divine substance minimizes the personal differences which exists among the three Persons of the Trinity. Likewise Moltmann rejects the modalism of Barth who defines God as Absolute Subject with three eternal modes of being. What constitutes the unity of God is not substance or modes of being, but the relational, perichoretic indwelling of the three Persons. This divine process is what constitutes their fellowship and perfects them in a unity of love. In this way, the pitfall of subordinationism is eliminated, and a monarchical model is avoided. The significance of Moltmann's work in pneumatology is that he takes this perichoretic model and deepens its meaning and application for our contemporary world. He shows that we must think of the Trinitarian persons as equals; each possesses will and understanding; each speaks to each other; each turns to each other in love and communion.¹⁹

How is this perichoretic unity of the Trinity to be arrived at theologically? Moltmann's answer is that through salvation history we come to see that God has revealed Godself in this fashion. What this history of salvation reveals is that God is not a distant monarch who stands over against the world and above the world in a dominating and threatening way. Rather, what is perceived through the history which God has with Israel and finally in Jesus of Nazareth is a God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This triune God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. God is Father, not only because God is the source of all reality, but because God is the Father of Jesus Christ. It is God's relationship with his Son which bestows upon God a sense of Fatherhood. Likewise, the Son's relationship to the Father is what bestows upon him his sense of Sonship. And it is through the power of the Holy Spirit which enables the Father and the Son to be so related and at the same time for the Father and Son to be in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit to be in the Father and Son. The point of creation, reconciliation, and glorification is that men and women and all of creation might become a part of the "circulation" of the triune God.²⁰

One of the social implications of the perichoretic concept of the Trinity is just as there is mutuality, reciprocity, and equality among the persons of the Trinity so likewise is this a model for the world. Wolfhart Pannenberg raises the issue whether Moltmann's distinction between the divine "constitution" and divine "circulation" can be used to minimize the concept of the monarchy of the Father. Pannenberg insists on the unity of the Trinitarian persons as grounded in the monarchy of the Father. This issue represents a sharp difference between Pannenberg and Moltmann.²¹ What has to be considered in this debate between Pannenberg and Moltmann is the practical issue that the term, monarch, has a negative connotation for many people because it implies a tyrannical notion of domination rather than a loving father whose desires the affection of his children. Yet, the "monarchy" of the Father which Moltmann allows with qualifications to be a part of the divine constitution cannot be bypassed because it is an implication of the Trinitarian revelation.

THE MODERN CONCEPT OF PERSON

The concept of person emerged as a result of the church's attempt to define how Jesus could be called God and man at the same time in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Von Rad has pointed out that the biblical concept of God who reveals Godself in history as personal is the original source of the concept of person. "Here alone, in his encounter with God, does mankind become great and interesting, breaking through the enigma of his humanity to discover all the inherent potentialities of his self-conscious existence."²² Interestingly enough, the late neo-Marxist atheist and Czech philosopher Vitezslav Gardavsky (a personal friend of Moltmann) has also shown that the Old Testament revelation of God to Abraham as a self-conscious, transcendent being who stands outside of nature is the original source for the emergence of the concept of person in the modern world.²³

The Greek word for person (*prosopon*) meant "mask" which actors in the ancient Greek theater wore on their face as they confronted the audience representing a particular character. The word literally means "face, visage, countenance." It had strictly an objective meaning without any reference to subjective self-consciousness or permanent duration.

In Latin theology, the term, person, was first used in reference to Sabellian modalism—one God with three masks or roles (*prosopon*). In Greek theology, the Greek term *hypostasis* (a parallel term to *prosopon*) was used in developing the doctrine of the Trinity. The term *hypostasis* did not carry the meaning of mask or mere appearance, but was used to denote the individual existence of a particular nature. Whereas *hypostasis* was eventually the word Greek theology chose for the Trinity, the Latin term *persona* was developed in Western theology and was deepened in its meaning to describe one's particular, unique, individual, permanent existence.²⁴ By the sixth century Boethius formulated the definitive, classical definition of personhood: "A person is an individual substance of a rational nature."²⁵ In other words, a person is one who possesses unique individual existence with intelligence and is non-interchangeable with others.²⁶

Using Boethius' definition of personhood, Moltmann shows that the three persons of the Trinity are not mere modes of being. They are not simply three masks which God wears in God's revelation to humanity. There are not mere roles or expressions of the one God. Rather, the three persons of the Trinity "are individual, unique, non-inter-

changeable subjects of the one, common divine substance, with consciousness and will. Each of the Persons possesses the divine nature in a non-interchangeable way; each presents it in his own way."²⁷ Accordingly, there is both the divine nature which the three persons have in common, but there is also the nature which the three persons uniquely possess for themselves each in his own way.

The particular nature of each divine person is shaped by their relationship to one another. For the decisive characteristic of each person is not simply an abstract oneness which binds them together; rather, what gives each person their own unique nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the relationship which they share together in their common bond. Being a person thus involves more than just being a unique individual possessing rationality, but it also includes the social element of being in relationship with others.²⁸

Moltmann shows that "relations" and "substantial individuality" are essential ingredients for understanding the Trinity today. Unfortunately, the Western understanding of Trinity defined "person" largely in terms of "relation" as if a person is relation. But God as Father means more than just God is related as Father. It means that the Father has concrete existence as a person with being, not just a mode of being. The Father has his fatherhood by relation to the Son, but this relation is not the concrete existence of the Father, but rather this relationship presupposes his actual, distinct existence. Person and relation are reciprocal in their meaning; for to be a person presupposes relations, and relations presuppose persons. To restrict the meaning of "persons" to "relations" is modalistic because it eliminates the enduring concrete subjective existence of the person. We have Augustine largely to thank for introducing the concept of relation into the meaning of personhood. But even so, his explanation for describing the Holy Spirit as the relational unity of the Father and Son implies that the Holy Spirit has no genuine personal identity of his own. This implies the Holy Spirit is more like an impersonal force than a real person who is intimately related to the Father and Son as an equal partner. The need to recognize the distinct person of the Holy Spirit as an equal partner in the triunity of God is why the Eastern church preferred the use of *hypostasis* in stead of *properson*.²⁹ Unless "relation" also includes "substantial individuality," then the Holy Spirit is not really thought of as a divine subject along with the Father and Son.³⁰

On the other hand, Moltmann finds the Orthodox tradition to be weak because it only assumes that the relations "manifest" the three persons, as if the relations are not essential aspects of the distinctive nature of the three persons. Moltmann argues that the "relations" of the three persons must be taken seriously in the sense that they are mutually and reciprocally bonded together in fellowship and love. Personality and relationships are inextricably connected.³¹

This mutual reciprocity and interdependence of the triune God is the social model for understanding the meaning of the whole of human life and creation. Moltmann finds in this personal model for God as Trinity the basis for social reconstruction and change in the world. Hence his concern for human liberation, ecological concerns, and the many troublesome aspects of social life. Particularly he finds consolation and hope in spite of the experience of widespread suffering in the world today because the God of Jesus is revealed as one who suffers with us. Without God's capacity for pathos and emotional involvement with his creation, God would not be the God of hope. And only in

Trinitarian thinking does it makes sense to talk about the love of God and his emotional capacity to feel with us.

In the Enlightenment period, the subjective concept of autonomy led to a focus on the absolute, substantial idea of personhood as in Kant's concept of the transcendental ego. But even the concept of autonomy as used by Kant did not mean the sheer irrelevance of feeling nor the idea of mere individualism. For the autonomy of reason meant for Kant that a mature individual is one who was properly in touch with one's own potentiality and inner resources for living responsibly in the world. Autonomy meant having the courage to think for oneself as opposed to living in an immature relationship of dependency upon others. For Kant the concept of autonomy clearly included a sense of moral responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect. This relational aspect shows that Kant did not have in mind an individualistic experience of arbitrariness when he spoke of the autonomous individual.³²

With Fichte and Hegel God came to be defined as Absolute Subject as opposed to Augustine's concept of God as Substance. Karl Barth picked up this Hegelian concept of God as Absolute Subject to define the nature of God's oneness, and he consequently substituted 'modes of being' for the Trinitarian persons.³³ Barth's concern was that the meaning of persons carries with it today the absolute concept of sheer autonomous individuality and self-consciousness without reference to being-in-relationship with other persons.³⁴ Barth thus thinks that the modern concept of personality was not included previously in the pre-modern world.³⁵ Hence Barth called for a new way of framing the doctrine of the Trinity which would not be in conflict with the meaning of personhood as it is used today.

Barth thus featured the oneness of God who in a threefold manner repeats himself in the mode of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God's oneness is defined as a Person with self-consciousness which is reflected from within itself as a threefold "divine repetition."³⁶ In fact, Barth's fear of tritheism is so great that he studiously avoids any possibility of ascribing personality to the Trinity distinctions. For Barth any idea of individual conscious existence given to the three distinctions within God "is scarcely possible without tritheism."³⁷

Is Barth right that the term, person, can no longer be used in reference to the Trinitarian distinctions because the modern usage is allegedly different? And is it true that only in the modern period has the concept of self-consciousness been applied to the concept of personhood?³⁸ Moltmann disputes the claim that the word, person, has undergone such a radical difference in meaning in the modern period. He also disputes the claim that self-consciousness is a modern addition to its meaning as well.³⁹

Moltmann surely seems right in his assessment over against Barth. While it is true that Augustine's concept of the relational concept of person did minimize the element of substantial individuality (*hypostasis*) and hence his tendency toward modalism, yet Boethius' definition of personhood as a *rational* individual carried with it the twin ideas of individual existence and self-consciousness.

Moltmann is right to call attention to the centrality of the divine persons for a genuine Christian theological understanding of the one God. With prophetic zeal, he has argued for a Trinitarian conception of God as the basis for resolving the personal, social, and ecological problems in the world today. For the way out of a repressive cultural individualism and its social irresponsibility is a return to Trinitarian thinking.

Trinitarian thinking opposes "domination" and "exploitation" and is the key to the meaning of freedom and love.

TRINITARIANISM AS A PANENTHEISM

Some suggest that Moltmann identifies God with the natural process.⁴⁰ This is erroneous because Moltmann certainly does not identify God with the finite world. No one writing in the area of theology has developed more clearly the nature of God as Creator *ex nihilo*. Quite literally for Moltmann, God spoke the temporal world into being through his Word in the power of the Spirit. God in no way is to be identified ontologically with the world in a pantheistic sense. But neither is God's relationship to be defined in terms of deism, as if God stands above the world in another realm separate from this realm. Moltmann defines God's transcendence in terms of the future, a concept first suggested by Johannes Metz.⁴¹ He stands ahead of us and is certainly different in his very essence from the world.

Moltmann's use of "panentheism" is a terminological substitution for monotheism. Pannenberg does not agree with Moltmann's decision not to use the term, monotheism, but he defends Moltmann against the misunderstanding of his critics who accuse him of abandoning the historic Christian view of God. Pannenberg, in particular, defends Moltmann against the charge of tritheism.⁴² Both Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg are in essential agreement concerning the new focus and deepened understanding of the significance of the Holy Spirit.

Moltmann's choice of panentheism⁴³ is related to his concern to show that God is the source of all reality, the agent in all reality, and the power active in all reality. This is why he decides against the term monotheism because it fails to convey the dynamic involvement of God in Creation and it specifically obscures the Trinitarian nature of God's essence. Some who apparently have only given a cursory reading of Moltmann's writings think that his "panentheism" identifies God's essence with the world. I once mentioned to Moltmann that some of his American critics accuse him of being a humanist or possibly a pantheist to which he replied with an expression of surprise and disbelief.

Roger Olsen and Stanley Grenz reflect this misunderstanding of Moltmann's view of God's relationship to the world.⁴⁴ They even think that Moltmann denies God's eternal Triune existence because Moltmann says that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity. They failed to see that Moltmann is only taking seriously the revelation of God in history and that what God is in himself is revealed in history and what the Son of God experiences in our history also is incorporated into God's experience of Godself. Of course only the Son of God, for example, suffered on the Cross (Moltmann is not a patristicist!), but his sufferings were experienced by the Father as the loss of his Son. In other words, Jesus' death was felt by the Father who loves His Son and who enters affectionately into the life of the Son through the Spirit. Moltmann frankly recognizes that his statement that the immanent Trinity is also the economic Trinity is open to misunderstanding "because it then sounds like the dissolution of the one in the other," but he clearly explains his meaning that there is no divorce between God and history.

Olsen even questions whether Moltmann is an "Evangelical ally" because of "hints of panentheism."⁴⁵ If any theologian has ever consistently maintained God's divine otherness

from the created order, it is Moltmann. He explicitly rejects the process theology of Schubert Ogden and John Cobb with their identification of God with the world and its rejection of a traditional doctrine of the Trinity based on revelation.⁴⁶ Moltmann's critique of Paul Tillich's "panentheism" strikes at the root concern of Olsen. Moltmann rejects Tillich's inclusion of God's essence within the created world.⁴⁷ Moltmann clearly affirms God's involvement with the world, but it is an involvement based on God's decision of love. It is not an ontologically pantheistic involvement!⁴⁸ Moltmann is no more pantheistically inclined than Peter who speaks of our being made "partakers of divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4) or Paul who speaks of everything existing in Christ (Col. 1:17). Moltmann clearly distinguishes between an emphasis on the nearness of God to his creation and a pantheistic identification of God with the world.⁴⁹ Moltmann rejects Whitehead's identification of God with "a unified, world process" because this means "God is turned into the comprehensive ordering factor in the flux of happening."⁵⁰ Over against all other forms of pantheism, Moltmann insists on "the fundamental distinction between creation and Creator."⁵¹ Over against the one-one-sided "monotheistic" divorce between God and the world, Moltmann insists on a Trinitarian view of Creation.⁵² The pantheism of Cobb, Ogden, and Whitehead results in a "divinization of the world,"⁵³ whereas traditional "monotheism" is monarchical in tendency, and its extreme de-divinization of the world has resulted in a godless view of nature. Trinitarian theology preserves God's essential distinction from the world, while at the same time the world God has created exists in God.⁵⁴ Moltmann's theology of creation *ex nihilo* is clearly expressed in his own words: "The World was created neither out of pre-existent matter, nor out of the divine Being itself. It was called into existence by the free will of God."⁵⁵ Moltmann's shows that the free will of God does not mean arbitrariness, but rather God's freedom is rooted in God's love.⁵⁶ Hence the divine love of the Trinitarian persons is the pantheistic basis for a theology of creation.

The choice of the term panentheism is based on its ability to express the close proximity of the Creator with his creation—"everything is in God and God is in everything." The term monotheism is disadvantaged by its inability to be so comprehensive in its designation of God's relationship to the world. There is not the slightest trace of pantheism to be found in Moltmann's panentheism. Barth has shown that the safest protection against atheism and pantheism is the doctrine of the Trinity.⁵⁷ Surely Moltmann's unequivocal affirmation of the Trinity, along with the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, leaves no room for misunderstanding his theology as a pantheism or humanism.

THE HISTORY OF GOD

Some critics have suggested that Moltmann's understanding of the Trinity reduces God to the finite historical process. This is a misconstrual of Moltmann's concept of history. Moltmann believes that history needs to be redefined and enlarged in its meaning from the positivistic view of history which has dominated contemporary thought. History is not simply the realm of the finite, as if God stands above history and his revelation has to be inserted vertically from above. Rather, reality is history! This is so because history is the sphere of the personal and the history of salvation reveals that the ultimate reality of God is personal. Hence it is appropriate to speak of the history of humanity, but it is also appropriate to speak of the history of God. God is not a life-

less, static, monarch devoid of movement and relationship. Rather, God is one essence with three distinct, interrelated subjects who possess will, feeling, and understanding. These three *hypostases* are beings-in-relationship. Their reality is also historical because of their personal involvement in the life of each other. Their Trinitarian history is not a finite process. It does include the concept of process in terms of the divine *procession* of the Spirit from the Father of the Son, as Origen maintained. The mistake of American process theology is that it does not make the theological distinction between the eternal procession of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the temporal, natural processes of nature and finite time. When critics of Moltmann realize this enlarged and more biblically derived meaning of history, then their objections to his speaking of the history of God will be alleviated. Interestingly enough, Moltmann defends Joachim of Fiore against the heretical charge that he reduced the Trinity to world history.⁵⁸

This historical understanding of reality has its origin in Hegel's philosophy of history. Just as Aristotle had defined reality as substance, so Hegel defined the comprehensive whole of reality as history. Just as substance for Aristotle was not a category among other categories of reality but was reality itself, so history is not a category of reality among other categories but is reality itself. Hegel's historical interpretation of reality corresponds to the biblical emphasis that the decisive meaning of revelation is the personal disclosure of God in history. History is the sphere of the personal and hence the very essence of reality itself. To be sure, Hegel's philosophy of history and his articulation of the nature of God seemed to get lost in his use of dialectical abstractions. Moltmann also believes that Hegel's concept of the Trinity is modalistic. Nevertheless, his highlighting the nature of reality as historical constitutes his greatest contribution. Any theology which is going to address the contemporary mind today in a persuasive manner can hardly avoid acknowledging the rise of the modern historical consciousness. Moltmann (and Pannenberg) are the influential thinkers in the contemporary world largely because of the effectiveness of presenting a historical understanding of reality in contrast to the nonhistorical, substantialist thinking of classical thought derived from Aristotle. To be sure, the category of substance is not simply dropped out of their vocabulary, but it is rather re-conceptualized in historical terms.

Moltmann emphasizes that this coming of Christ is something that is a real happening in time; unlike some theologians who want to demythologize the advent of Christ or reinterpret it in a supratemporal and nonhistorical manner, Moltmann preserves the biblical focus on a real, temporal eschatological happening. He writes:

But if Christ's parousia is equated with God's eternity, then there is no moment at which it can enter time. There is then no future end of time—nothing but the limitation of all the times of human history through God's eternal moment. But this puts an end to all the real and futurist expectation of the parousia which echoes in the early Christian 'maranatha—come soon!'; and transforms eschatology into mysticism.⁵⁹

Moltmann criticizes Barth because he interprets the advent of Christ as if it were only the final presentation of the salvation perfected in Christ's death on the Cross. But if the real future time of Christ's coming "can do no more than disclose the perfect tense of sal-

vation," Moltmann argues that "the New Testament's futurist assertions about salvation are meaningless."⁶⁰

No theologian in recent times has had a stronger emphasis on the real, temporal, future happening of the coming of Christ to bring about the end of time and the beginning of eternity for creation than Moltmann. Moltmann seeks to protect the understanding of the parousia of Christ from being interpreted either as merely temporized or merely eternalized. He complains that the "Christian expectation of the parousia was also stifled by the theologians who declared that the so-called delay of the parousia was a fictitious problem which had nothing to do with true faith, since faith experiences and expects God's grace every moment."⁶¹ This minimizing of the future expectation of the coming of Christ due to the supposed embarrassment of Christ's delay was the price the church paid for its integration into the Roman Empire which had the effect of turning Christianity into a civil religion.⁶² Moltmann notes that it is due in large part to the development of the eschatologically oriented theology in recent years which has helped the church once again to restore the parousia of Christ to its rightful position within the framework of Christian faith.⁶³

The main reason why Moltmann has been able to speak more biblically, forthrightly, and convincingly about the transcendent realities of the parousia, heaven, the Trinity, the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead, his deity, and the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit in human life and in creation is because he has taken seriously the modern historicization of reality.⁶⁴ The extreme supranaturalistic ontology of Barth which radicalized God's being above the world in a dualistic fashion leaves one with the feeling that Christian belief is dogmatically handed down from God above in an irrationalist and authoritarian manner. To be sure, Barth's theology presupposed a real (as opposed to a demythologized) history of salvation, but his dualistic view of God and the world worked against his evangelical exegesis and actually moves in the direction of thinking of this world in secularistic terms. It is significant that the "Death of God" theologians of the 1960s were largely Barth's students who specifically said that their secular interpretation of the gospel was "initiated with Barth."⁶⁵ Other students of Barth such as Moltmann and Pannenberg embraced his biblically based theology and its focus on the history of salvation while rejecting his dualistic, supranaturalistic bifurcation of God and the world. Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* addressed the same concern of secularism reflected in "Death of God" theologians, students who had taken seriously Barth's idea of God's absence and total otherness from the world. The main difference between Moltmann and the secular theologians was that Moltmann appropriated Barth's style of evangelical exegesis of Scripture and his corresponding theology of salvation history, but Moltmann developed a Trinitarian view of history which preserved God's transcendence for the world instead of a dualism of God over against the world. In this way, Moltmann was able to take the central theological distinctives of Barth and develop them in a more consistent fashion—both logically and biblically. Hence Moltmann's Trinitarian pneumatology is fundamentally a theological refinement and further development of Barth's Trinitarian Christology.

Barth's "irrationalist" understanding of faith cannot but create a skeptical feeling that faith really does not have a basis beyond its own imagination after all. His dualistic image of God occupying space above the world as a divine monarch makes it impossible to

affirm the history of salvation in the Bible in which God is intimately related to his people as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As opposed to the deistic tendencies of a supranaturalistic ontology, Moltmann's Trinitarian history of salvation and his eschatologically oriented theology with its focus on the immediacy of God's Holy Spirit in the world today have contributed to a revitalization of the biblical understanding of God which serves as the basis for bringing about social change, ecological responsibility, and personal transformation in the lives of human beings starving spiritually, emotionally, and physically from deprivation, abuse, domination, and discrimination. Only as human beings are brought into a saving relationship with the Father of Jesus Christ through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is there salvation for individuals as well as the world as a whole. Moltmann's focus on the social implications of a Trinitarian doctrine of God and a corresponding belief that a relationship with God commits the believer to take an attitude of moral responsibility for the whole of creation is a fitting reminder to the Christian community that we really do not take seriously the gospel if we try to privatize the meaning of faith in a mystical retreat from the world. For the biblical revelation is most adequately understood in terms of reality as history, not in a dualistic split between God and the world as if reality could be compartmentalized into religious ghettos.

Informed by the Trinitarian theology of the early Greek Fathers and Eastern Orthodoxy, Moltmann transforms the Trinitarian Christology of Barth into a Trinitarian Pneumatology. If God is thought of primarily in terms of Father and Son, there is no return, no reciprocity, no intimacy. There is no friendship and no emotional warmth. This is the weakness of the Westernized view of God. This was the weakness of Augustine and Calvin.⁶⁶ God was primarily understood in terms of his abstract oneness defined with a modalistic tendency—with the Holy Spirit being hardly more than the "relation" between Father and Son. But the distinct Person of the Holy Spirit who is co-equal with the Father and Son means there is life and process in God—the divine *procession* as the Eastern Fathers explained. The Holy Spirit is the power and agent, through him the Father knows his Son. This means God is really present to Godself through the divine circulation. This means that God is affectionate; God is loving.

This allows Moltmann to go beyond Barth by developing the emotional and passionate nature of God. The Medieval theologians, in particular, debated whether the concept of wisdom or will was the fundamental attribute of God. Moltmann highlights the feeling capacity in God.⁶⁷ God suffers; God enjoys and delights in God's creation. The Trinitarian Persons really and truly experience each other in love. Though there is no deficiency of being in God, God shares Godself truly and intimately with the world out of the superabundance of God being and love.⁶⁸ God enters into friendship with us as God's creatures, and God's love is really poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who empowers us to love each other and the whole of God's creation. This love truly experienced in the very depths of our being is transforming. God's experience of us is also meaningful to God.

Though a Reformed scholar, Moltmann specifically does not accept the view that the Holy Spirit is to be interpreted primarily in terms of the eschaton. Barth, his teacher, developed an emphasis on the confirming, sanctifying, perfecting, and transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Barth affirmed that through repeated experiences of the outpouring of

the Spirit, the believer is already in the process of realizing moments of spiritual fullness and sanctifying grace until the totality of righteousness is realized in glorification.⁶⁹

Comparable to Barth's theology of the progressive development of the Christian life from its beginning in justifying faith (the Easter event) to its sanctification through the Spirit (Pentecost),⁷⁰ Moltmann develops a theology of the threefold kingdom of God derived from Joachim of Fiore but also found in early Cappodocian fathers.⁷¹ Moltmann delineates three different stages of God's self-revelation—the kingdom of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. These three stages of God's revelation are not three different kingdoms but a progressive development of the one kingdom of God. In the kingdom of the Father, we surrender to his sovereignty, recognize his lordship over creation, and become his glad servants. In the kingdom of the Son, we are adopted into God's family and become God's children. Outwardly we are still God's servants, but inwardly we share in the intimacy of his family through our joint heirship with Jesus Christ, God's Son. In the kingdom of the Spirit, our relationship to God takes on further meaning as we become God's friends. This third stage of the kingdom means that we have a direct relationship to God; it is now consummated in the truest sense of the term. For God dwells within us through the Spirit. This means that we have true friendship with God at this deepest level. This is why Jesus said to his disciples, "No longer do I call you servants . . . but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). Jesus promised his disciples this kind of friendship because they would receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Moltmann reminds us that these stages of our relationship to God as servants, as children, and as friends do not mean that each stage can be isolated as if we could be God's servant without being his children or friends. This means we cannot simply date these stages of salvation history in a mere chronological way, though that would certainly seem to be involved as well. What distinguishes these stages is the focus of each one. The focus of the kingdom of the Father is not the same as those of the kingdom of the Son and kingdom of the Spirit. The kingdom of the Father focuses on our being his servants, but even in this stage we are his children and friends in an embryonic sense. The possibilities implicit in the kingdoms of the Son and the Spirit were already tacitly available in the kingdom of the Father. For the kingdom of the Father established the trend which was unfolded in the kingdoms of the Son and of the Spirit. This means the kingdom of the Son embraces the kingdom of the Father and the kingdom of the Spirit embraces the kingdom of the Father and Son. Moltmann intends for his interpretation of the successive yet inclusive development of each Kingdom embracing each other to avoid the modalistic tendency in Joachim's emphasis on the chronologically successive stages.⁷²

Moltmann's theological analysis of a perichoretic concept of unity offers insight into how modalism and tritheism can be avoided. He shows that a salvation-historical approach means that salvation is interpreted in a Trinitarian way so that the distinction among the persons of the Trinity is a unity in the sense that the Trinitarian persons are "at one" but not simply "one." Moltmann links the perichoretic concept of the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit soteriologically to an integrating concept of unity. This means that we are brought into union with God, not in an external and formal manner, but in terms of an authentic relationship, that is, we really "participate in God's eternal love and God's eternal song of praise." Moltmann describes this relation-

ship as a "unity of the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father, and of the Spirit in the Father and the Son."⁷³

Taking his cue from Barth's theology of the Holy Spirit (which bears many similarities to High Anglican and Wesleyan views), Moltmann offers a breadth of categories which advance beyond his own Reformed tradition. I am referring primarily to Moltmann's multidimensional concept of experience, his understanding of reality as history, his relational understanding of persons, his panentheistic concept of God's relation to the world, his perichoretic interpretation of the Trinity, his concept of the social and ecological implications of the doctrine of the Trinity, his concept of eschatology, and his concept of "the reciprocal perichoresis of God and ourselves."

This latter concept provides a basis for understanding the intimacy of God to the world. Moltmann shows that this "reciprocal perichoresis of God and ourselves" is "much more intimate communion than the community between Creator and creature. It is the communion of reciprocal indwelling. In the Holy Spirit the eternal God participates in our transitory life, and we participate in the eternal life of God. This reciprocal community is an immense, outflowing source of energy."⁷⁴ The evidence of the "vitalizing energies" of the Spirit is to make "existence shine." He writes: "In pictures, earlier generations liked to depict this shining power of being in the form of a halo. What they were trying to say was that the life that is charismatically possessed and sanctified again becomes the image of God, and is illuminated by the divine glory . . . which it reflects."⁷⁵

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The twenty-first century may become known as the Age of the Spirit. If so, Moltmann's Trinitarian pneumatology with its ecumenical orientation could help in preserving the church from an abstract pantheism, religious fanaticism, and formalistic concepts of the God which are sterile and unrelated to the needs of a people impoverished emotionally and socially through living in a dysfunctional world. This would mean that the reduction of the Holy Spirit to the human spirit in secularistic humanism, along with the subjectivistic methodology of "modernism" which Barth refuted, would need to be resisted. Perhaps a new offensive in support of the coming kingdom of God could be mounted with an experiential theology which is based in Scripture, consistent with the Trinitarian pneumatology of the early church Fathers, emotionally healthy, socially responsible, and intellectually rigorous and compelling.

Moltmann's Trinitarian pneumatology is a call for the church to be disciplined and responsible in its life and thinking and to develop a comprehensive, holistic theology. Pastorally, Moltmann affirms the affectional nature of God who really reaches out to the world through the power of the Spirit. This, for the Christian, means the willingness to embrace the pain of the world. Moltmann wrote *The Theology of Hope* when the "death of God" theology was prominent. His theological reflections were like a breath of fresh air sweeping away the stench of despair. As the church now faces the twenty-first century, Moltmann has advanced the optimism of grace, believing the church can be a transforming agent in the world through its identification with a suffering and dysfunctional world. Will the church receive the power of the Holy Spirit to enable it to fulfill its commission to preach the gospel, to love one's neighbor as oneself, to help the oppressed, to heal the sick, to feed the poor, to give water to the thirsty,

and to clothe the naked? Jesus offered the disciples the Holy Spirit as “the promise of the Father” to empower them to be faithful. “Come, O Holy Spirit, Come.”

NOTES

1. Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 276-79.
2. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1963), I, 1, 345-46.
3. Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher*, p. 278.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
5. *Karl Barth Letters 1961-1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangmeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans. and edited by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 174-176.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
7. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. M. Kohl (London/Minneapolis: SCM Press/Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 17-31.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
10. Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1950), pp. 66-69.
11. *Spirit of Life*, p. 30.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 31ff.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-77.
15. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. M. Kohl (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1981), p. 140.
16. Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1991), p. 38.
17. Moltmann, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, p. 176.
18. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, p. 59; Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, p. 425.
19. Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, pp. 84-85.
20. Moltmann, *Theology and the Kingdom*, p. 178.
21. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, I, 324-25; Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, p. xix.
22. Von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch*, trans. E. Dickens (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 153.
23. Vitezslav Gardavsky, *God Is Not Yet Dead*, trans. Vivenne Menkes (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973), p. 28.
24. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, 408-9; Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 171.
25. Cf. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), vol. 2, part I, p. 118 for a discussion of this concept and its subsequent impact on Western thought through Aquinas.
26. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 171.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, 419; Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 171.
29. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, 408.
30. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 168-69.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73.
32. Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 321.
33. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, 407.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 410.

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 412.
37. Ibid., p. 411.
38. Ibid., p. 420.
39. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p.141, 145-46.
40. David P. Scaer, "Theology of Hope," *Tensions in Contemporary Theology*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and Alan F. Johnson (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 218.
41. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 92.
42. *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. 1988), I, 336n.
43. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 19, 129-32.
44. Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th Century Theology, God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1992), pp. 182-83.
45. Roger E. Olson, "Is Moltmann An Evangelical's Ally?" *Christianity Today* (January 11, 1993), p. 32.
46. Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, p. 18.
47. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 83ff.
48. Ibid., p. 851.
49. Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, p. 35.
50. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 78.
51. Ibid., p. 79.
52. Ibid., p. 98.
53. Ibid., p. 78.
54. Ibid., p. 98.
55. Ibid., p. 75.
56. Ibid.
57. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, I, 347.
58. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 204.
59. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 318.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., p. 317.
62. Ibid., p. 312.
63. Ibid., p. 316.
64. Ibid., p. 331.
65. Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *The Death of God* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966), p. xii.
66. Tillich particularly calls attention to Augustine's tendency toward Monarchianism and his preference for using the word "person" in reference to the unity of God rather than to the three individuals, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *History of Christian Thought*, p. 116.
67. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 21-60.
68. Ibid., p. 23.
69. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV, Part 4, 76-77.
70. Ibid., p. 30.
71. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, pp. 203-22.
72. Ibid., pp. 208-9.
73. Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, pp. 86-87.
74. Ibid., pp. 195-96.
75. Ibid., p. 196.

